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Washington Health Benefit Exchange Board Adopts Equity Statement

Statement developed by the Health Equity Technical Advisory Committee receives unanimous approval

OLYMPIA, Wash. – As part of their strategic planning retreat held on June 21, the Washington Health Benefit Exchange Board acted unanimously to adopt a formal equity statement proposed by the Exchange’s [Health Equity Technical Advisory Committee \(TAC\)](#).

“Equity is an important indicator of whether residents have equal access to care, and that the same level of care is available to everyone,” said Ron Sims, chairman for the Exchange Board. “It is gratifying to see the Exchange take action that is representative of our sustained desire to remove any health care disparities that exist in both treatment and outcome.”

The equity statement approved by the Exchange Board is as follows:

Equity is a fundamental pillar to the society we seek to build. The process of advancing toward equity will be disruptive and demands vigilance, dismantling deeply entrenched systems of privilege and oppression. We must focus our efforts on people and places where needs are greatest, especially communities of color, and go beyond remedying a particular inequity to address all determinants of health.

Our goal is that all Washingtonians have full and equal access to opportunities, power and resources to achieve their full potential.

“An opportunity exists for the Exchange to serve as a voice for health status and other health-related issues in Washington state,” said Dr. Benjamin Danielson, member of the Exchange Board. “Adopting this equity statement allows the Exchange Board to have stronger discussions on the social determinants of health as well as other broader issues influencing the way we approach health.”

This newly-adopted statement will be integrated into the Washington Health Benefit Exchange 2018-2019 Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan is approved by the Board and submitted to the legislature on an annual basis. It includes four overarching goals for the Exchange, including the promotion of equity across the system.

“Establishing a clear equity statement advances our commitment to connecting all Washingtonians with health coverage,” said Pam MacEwan, CEO of the Washington Health Benefit Exchange. “The Board’s adoption of this statement creates an explicit guide for the Exchange to follow as it works to eliminate health care inequalities among residents of Washington state.”

The Health Equity TAC was created by the Exchange on Feb. 21, 2013. The committee is comprised of health care professionals representing a variety of areas within the industry. Since their introduction, the Health Equity



TAC has provided guidance on issues including language access, health literacy, cultural sensitivity, and reaching the state's groups at risk for obstacles to access.

"This committee was established more than five years ago to provide experience and professional perspectives related to health equity," said Jesús Bervis, eligibility manager at Neighborcare Health and charter member of the Health Equity TAC. "Nevertheless, equity is a long journey and we must continue to work together on identifying opportunities to fine-tune our efforts to achieve it. By formally adopting this statement, the Exchange is taking an important step on that journey to an equitable and just society."

Reminders: Enrollment is offered year-round to individuals and families through Washington Apple Health (Medicaid). Customers enrolled in Apple Health will receive a notice of 60 days before the month they enrolled in or renewed their coverage last year.

About Washington Healthplanfinder

Washington Healthplanfinder is an online marketplace for individuals and families in Washington to compare and enroll in health insurance coverage and gain access to tax credits, reduced cost sharing and public programs such as Medicaid. The next open enrollment period for Washington Healthplanfinder begins on Nov. 1.

About Washington Apple Health

In Washington, Medicaid is called [Washington Apple Health](#). Free or low-cost coverage is available year-round for those who qualify. Since the Affordable Care Act launched in October 2013, more people have access to preventive care, like cancer screenings, treatment for diabetes and high blood pressure, and many other health care services they need to stay healthy. Apple Health clients enroll and renew online using *Washington Healthplanfinder*. Apple Health is administered by the Washington State Health Care Authority: www.hca.wa.gov

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